

Challenges of International Librarians: Knowledge Sharing from Filipino Librarians Working Across Asia

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Purpose of the Study

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Student Learning and Information Literacy Committee (SLILC) recently published a white paper on Global Perspectives on Information Literacy: Fostering a Dialogue for International Understanding with a chapter focused on Asia and Oceania. In that chapter Dorner (2017) has argued that some teaching tools developed by Western countries may not be appropriate for Asian countries. In particular he noted that Sri Lankan and Vietnamese academic librarians have a lower status compared to academic staff and that this kind of perception may lead to an unsuccessful working relationship that would in turn hinder student learning since Information Literacy (IL) involves working closely with faculty, teachers or tutors. Librarians have always struggled to be recognized as part of the team to hone student academic performance. This paper will provide information literacy strategies and partnerships involving Filipino librarians working across Asia. As Filipino educators with their own cultural backgrounds and limitations, how can they best fit in their international working environment? How do they initiate collaboration with the faculty members and teachers? What were the cultural challenges and factors before and during the implementation of an IL program and how were they able to cope with it? What IL standards or models are they following to make their IL programs effective? How supportive is the administration in their programs? These are just some of the questions that the paper will try to answer in the three Asian countries described below.

Methodology

This paper will provide case studies from three different Asian institutions representing South East Asia, East Asia, and Central Asia where Filipino librarians are employed. They will narrate their own experiences and challenges in creating information literacy

programs involving faculty collaborations and their best practices of teaching IL with foreign students. International Filipino librarians will share their stories on how they were able to champion their own IL programs overseas.

Findings

In general, Filipinos are believed to be courageous, adaptive and resilient in any kind of difficult situation. Filipino librarians also have these traits. Added to that is they can easily cultivate a sense of cultural awareness from any kind of environment. Filipinos can do any job with the help of proper training imbued with professional competencies. As an overseas employee, Filipinos are known to be visionary, flexible, patient and in possession of good interpersonal skills (Roberto, 2015). These traits are necessary for a Filipino librarian to work with locals and expatriates to fulfill their responsibility of sharing practical knowledge in the field of LIS.

Practical Applications

This paper will serve as a guide on how to start an IL program in a mixed cultural environment where collaboration is an essential factor to build a good program.

Statement of Originality

This is an attempt to collect, narrate and share the experiences of Filipino librarians working abroad and how they were able to convince and gain the trust of their fellow colleagues by instituting information literacy programs.

Keywords: Filipino librarian, expatriate, information literacy

Introduction

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) contribute to the national economy of the Philippines. As early as 1900s, Filipinos started working abroad to achieve a better life and experience professional growth (Yu, 2015). The number of migrant workers from the Philippines has grown over time and has expanded all over the world. The 2016 statistical report of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), informs the reader of more than 2 million OFWs around the world (POEA, 2016a). Librarians are no exemption to this trend. They are widely spread and can be traced from small islands in the Pacific to the gulf nations of the Middle East and the North American nations, the United States and Canada. This paper will not tackle how Filipino librarians were able to get librarian positions abroad, but on how they were able to successfully implement programs such as Information Literacy (IL). The paper will discuss the experiences of a non-native librarians working in a multi-culturally diverse environment.

Objectives and Statement of the Problem

This paper will try to answer the following questions on how Filipino librarians work as expatriates. On a micro-level, it will narrate how the individual experience of librarians affects their work in implementing an information literacy program. How can Filipino educators with their own particular cultural background and set of limitations best fit in the international working environment? How do they initiate collaboration with the faculty members and teachers to introduce an IL program? What were the cultural challenges and factors before and during the implementation of an IL program and how were they able to cope with it? What IL standards or models are they following to make their IL programs effective? How supportive are the administration in their programs? Finally, the librarians will share their IL teaching strategies.

Review of Related Literature

Starting a Career Abroad

Finding a career in your own country may be difficult for some, but doing so in a foreign land is even more difficult. Filipino expatriates, including librarians, decide to take an opportunity to go out of the country to move forward with their careers, look for greener pastures and build a name for themselves (Presbitero & Quita, 2017). Although economic reasons are important reasons for migrating abroad, the other motivation in choosing a career overseas would be finding your global path since there are many more options abroad. Nititham (2011) defines migration as a sense of agency where there is a sense of adventure and is all tied up to having more opportunities and options abroad rather than staying in the country. This may be true for Filipino librarians working abroad as there are a lot of opportunities for them to work. Joining an international workforce requires enough courage and determination especially when working within a multi-culturally diverse environment. Technical competencies and professional skills are also a must criteria when you are trying to apply for any job abroad since there is a great deal of competition.

The 2010 data from POEA shows 16 librarians, archivists and curators working abroad while the 2009 data records 24 of them were deployed overseas (POEA, 2016b). With this number of Filipino librarians working abroad, we can say that they are equipped to join an international work force since they have enough knowledge needed to fulfill what is required from them to do the advertised job.

Faculty – Librarian Collaboration

Fast forward to the time when the librarian is already deployed in his or her worksite. The librarian now needs to establish a good working relationship with the school/academic community. A school or academic librarian deals not only

with their students, but also with their teachers and faculty members. A successful Information Literacy program will only be achieved if there is a good rapport between faculties and librarians. At the onset of any program, collaboration is an essential practice in order to determine the content based on identifying the desired learning objectives and curriculum mapping (Mindi & Linda, 2016). This collaboration turns-out to be a good practice since there is a shared commitment between the faculty and librarian and it happens to improve student success in working with any research project or assignment. A librarian and faculty member should really work closely together to achieve the same goal of developing the IL skills of the students (Keyes & Barbier, 2013). Simons (2017) added that faculty-librarian collaboration is an opportunity to encourage strong relationships to support the research and instruction sessions for the students.

Librarians are not spared from being less appreciated in their professional work. In some Asian countries, poor recognition of librarians as being part of the academic team may also hinder the success of any institutionalized IL program. Dorner (2017) mentioned Sri Lanka and Vietnam as examples to demonstrate that librarians have lower status level compared to academic staff in these two countries.

Bombaro (2018) identified several challenges in integrating IL sessions for classes. One example would be strong faculty-librarian collaboration and that faculty members may be not aware of such available programs. Reaching out to the teachers and faculty is a good strategy in building a positive relationship.

Methodology

This paper will provide three case studies from three different Asian institutions representing South East Asia, East Asia, and Central Asia where Filipino librarians are employed. They will share their own experiences through a narrative inquiry. Furthermore, they will also discuss challenges in creating information literacy programs involving faculty collaboration and their best practices of teaching IL with foreign students. International Filipino librarians will share their stories on how they were able to champion their own IL programs overseas.

Status of Information Literacy in China

Information Literacy at Teda International School

The mission of TEDA International School is to develop global citizens within its culturally diverse community. In order to live up to its mission, students work on the Expected School-Wide Learning Results (ESLRs) which are heavily embedded across the curriculum and at all grade levels.

The TIS Library, with its different programs, supports the mission and philosophy of the school. Its main objectives are to provide for the information and literacy needs of the whole TIS community and in support of the curriculum; to create a safe and positive learning environment conducive for reading, research, and studying; and to develop users into effective and efficient users of information.

At this point, the librarian is revising the library curriculum to include both digital and information literacy skills for the Primary Department (Kindergarten to Grade 5). Primary students have a fixed library schedule in which they come to the library once a week. Their activities include borrowing books, literature appreciation, and digital and information literacy sessions.

No program currently exists for teaching information literacy skills in the Secondary Department (Grade 6 to 12). The Librarian communicated the need for an information literacy program with the English Language Teachers. It is rather vital to have open conversations as they bring in new ideas, plans, concerns, and actions that will help improve the school community (Quazzaire, 2018). Thus, the Librarian approached the Head of English Department to discuss the need for developing an information literacy program for the Secondary Department starting from the last term of the current school year up to school year 2018–2019.

How do we initiate collaboration with the teachers? How do teachers treat librarians as part of the team?

The Librarian has faculty status at TEDA International School and enjoys the same benefits as other expatriate teachers. The librarian is also given an opportunity to be part of a committee that addresses a particular program at the school. Currently, the librarian is a member of three committees namely the Technology Advisory Committee, the Show Committee, and the Professional Development Committee. Being a member of these committees gives the librarian an opportunity to be more involved in sharing his expertise not just to students but also to teachers and staff.

As a member of the Technology Advisory Committee, the librarian is able to easily suggest new technology programs or databases that will benefit the school community. In November of 2017, the librarian initiated a user trial of EBSCO databases such as Advanced Placement Source, Complete Online Package, Middle Online Package and Flipster. Prior to the start of the trial, an EBSCO expert representative visited the school to provide an orientation on how both faculty and students can take more advantage of these online databases. After more than two months of running the trial, the library received the user statistics report (Table 1).

Database	Database Sessions	Total Searches	Total Full-Text Download	Abstract Requests Download
Complete Online Package	300	647	44	58
Middle Online Package	390	855	114	71
Advanced Placement Source	45	96	11	3
Flipster	261	224	640	0
Total	996	1822	809	132

Table 1: EBSCO Databases User Report
Number of Students in Secondary: 128
Trial Run Date: November 23, 2017 to January 12, 2018

Prior to the start of the databases trial, almost all students were often using Google.com and/or Baidu.com to search for articles to help them accomplish their research. Though Google provides a plethora of information, this does not mean that students need or want these pieces of information (Halsema, 2017). In many cases academic databases are better sources of reliable published articles. Currently, the Librarian is waiting for approval from the administration for subscription to these databases. The data shown above were presented to the administration to justify this request. The Librarian is hopeful that approval will be granted so that students will have access to far more reliable and credible sources of information.

Challenges and factors before and during the implementation of the IL program

The Librarian is the first ever Filipino employee/faculty as most of the teachers come from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand which are all native English speaking countries. Although one of the official languages of the Philippines is English, Filipinos are not considered English native speakers in China.

Language has never been a challenge in drawing up an information literacy program for the school. The Librarian, having been able to work in an international school in the Philippines, is familiar with drafting and implementing an IL program for international schools. Faculty members tapped to collaborate in its implementation have been very open to suggestions and ideas of the Librarian.

What IL standards or models are they following to make their IL programs effective?

Tools for Real-time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills, also known as TRAILS, is a type of test with multiple-choice questions which targets information

literacy skills based on 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th grade standards. This is a free online system which was introduced to provide school librarians and teachers with a tool that helps diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of students in the information literacy area.

The Librarian has used TRAILS to gather baseline data. These will be used to aid him draft a pool of unit plans. The first step taken is to administer an initial online examination from two of the general assessments from TRAILS to students of both the Secondary and Primary Departments. This is followed by designing lesson plans that are aligned with the American Association of School Librarians' Standards for the 21st-Century Learner upon which assessments are also based.

There are five information categories covered by the test namely: develop a topic; identify potential sources; develop, use, and revise search strategies; evaluate sources and information; and recognize how to use information responsibly, ethically, and legally. Items covered are being used as an outline for developing the information literacy program of TEDA International School.

How supportive is the administration in their programs?

The school administration has been very supportive of the programs and activities being proposed by the Librarian. He is in charge of the entire library and all its existing programs. The leadership team has never declined any book order requests made by the Librarian. They also approved a user trial for EBSCOHost databases.

The TIS Library has an annual budget for the selection and acquisition of print and non-print resources. It has also received an additional technology budget that can be spent for any technology-related procurement or subscriptions. Currently, there are only three computer workstations for student use in the library. To help students access online resources such as Follett Destiny, Tumblebooks, Raz-Kids, Encyclopedia Britannica, Epic!, and Renaissance Accelerated Reader; the Librarian has requested for an additional four computers to be installed. This will also provide them with technology tools and the space they need to find information online.

Moreover, the Secondary Department has also purchased twenty more iPads for the library in addition to the twenty-six that are being loaned out to faculty members for classroom use. This step is taken to meet the high demand for iPads by many of the secondary teachers. Same is true for the Primary Department as they ordered twenty more iPads. Unlike the set up in the Secondary Department, teachers check-out the iPads from the Library at the start of the school year and these are then stationed in classrooms. The tablets are only returned in June for inventory and checkup purposes. These gadgets that the library loans out to both students and faculty members are being used to access digital information. Prior to the beginning of the school year, all students sign an acceptable use policy form which includes instructions on how to treat the devices responsibly and notices of

the need to respect intellectual property rights. The Librarian also conducts library orientation for all students on how to avoid plagiarism and how they can observe academic honesty.

Currently, the IL Program is in-process and under review. Both principals of the Primary and the Secondary Departments will review the information literacy program.

Status of Information Literacy in Indonesia

Information Literacy at Binus University

BINUS University Library and Knowledge Center acknowledges the importance of acquisition of information literacy skills for students, lecturers and stakeholders. The availability of resources became a challenge for students and lecturers because of the sheer size of the Internet.. Learning how to make use of the information effectively is a major concern not only for the librarians, but also the BINUS Administration.

In 2010, the IL program was already running in the library, however the approach implemented was not as extensive as the management would like. Most of the students were not aware of the availability of the resources or even the online materials that they could access for free in the library. These conclusions were reached on the basis of the data provided by the utilization report generated by the Digilib system. Digilib is an in house application created by BINUS IT to cater the circulation & reference services.

How do we initiate collaboration with the faculty? How do faculty treat librarians as part of the team?

To ensure that the IL program will be implemented successfully, the BINUS library reference team collaborated with the faculty of the English Department and other centers in BINUS to conceptualize an effective IL Program. It has been recommended to include the IL program as part of the library's Key Performance Indicators. A key performance indicator is a quantifiable measure an organization uses to determine how well it meets the set operational and strategic goals (Lake, 2017). The measurement includes the number of students and lecturers who will undergo the IL program of the library. This is to ensure that the target of seventy-five percent (75%) of all active library users will be able to use information effectively and to maximize the subscribed electronic resources acquired by the library. A sample KPI matrix is attached as an appendix.

The following programs have been conceptualized based on the ideas of both librarians and faculty members.

- a) Library orientation for new students (Kapitas Lecta)
- b) Orientation for new lecturers
- c) Research education
- d) Writing tutorial
- e) Anti-plagiarism campaign
- f) Online reference service

Since the IL program was already part of the KPI, the English Department and the Library concede that all programs must be achieved based on the target score and timeline. The online reference service, research education, and anti-plagiarism campaign were embedded through the BINUS Library website to make it available to all students anytime and anywhere. Students who wish to enroll in a class can sign-up via the Binus Library website for either a tutorial on writing a research paper or how to access the electronic resources. At the end of the year, the library got a score of four for this specific KPI. A total of 75% of the students and lecturers were inducted and underwent the IL program. The maximum score for this specific KPI is 6 if 100% of the students and lecturers underwent IL program.



Fig. 1. BINUS Library and Knowledge Center Website <https://library@binus.edu>

Challenges and factors before and during the implementation of the IL program

Resources

Students often need information to answer their research questions. Here, the constraints are mostly about access and how to gather and organize this information. Librarians help to overcome these challenges by teaching students how to find scholarly and relevant information not only in Google, but using the electronic resources of the library.

Plagiarism

Students who access the Internet think that they can make use of any information they acquire from the Internet without proper referencing. The role of the reference team is to educate the students not to cut and paste or rewrite any information they read online without proper acknowledging of the author. An anti-plagiarism campaign was initiated by the President of BINUS together with the business unit and center.

Language

The presence of a Filipina University Librarian in Binus Library became an opportunity for the medium of instruction of IL to be changed from Bahasa Indonesia to English. According to Cabigon (2018), the Philippines is recognized globally as one of the largest English-speaking nations, with the majority of its population having at least some degree of fluency in the language. English is the primary medium of instruction since the University's vision is to become a world class university by 2020. It was considered a great initiative that the medium of instruction should be written and spoken English.

What IL standards or models are they following to make their IL programs effective?

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) standard for information literacy was used by BINUS University to ensure that library customers acquire intellectual abilities, critical thinking and continuous learning.

How supportive is the administration in their programs?

Binus University, especially the Office of the Vice Rector for Operation and Resources, is very supportive to the library programs and initiatives. All the staff, budget, and materials needed were approved. The IL Program is up for re-evaluation and we are hoping for implementation the next academic year.

Status of Information Literacy in Kazakhstan

Information Literacy at Nazarbayev University

Information Literacy (IL) programs are quite new in Kazakhstan. The concept may have been known, but the scarcity of information about libraries applying the concept and delivering it in a proper manner makes it difficult to point out who is involved with the actual IL programs in the country.

This developing nation recorded a high literacy rate of more than 99% from ages 15 and above (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018) and tries its best to compete academically in both the regional and international arena. They have a huge advantage compared to other developing nations. For instance, the Nazarbayev University has won several student competitions abroad, such as the International

Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) held in the USA and the 19th European Inter-Varsity hosted by Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Latvia. These achievements appear to be a good indicator in assessing any form of literacy.

King, Dowding & Pflager (2013) explored the information seeking behavior of the university students at Nazarbayev University without the help of the librarian. They tested how familiar students are with the techniques of finding information. During that time, IL was already part of the library’s reference work. In 2015, embedded librarianship was introduced in the library. Collaboration among the departments and schools were implemented (Karjanto, Kairatbekkyzy & Agee, 2015). Information literacy sessions were expanded, including workshops about academic integrity, plagiarism, citations and copyright (Alenzuela, Groen, Kamilova, Terzi & Zvonareva, 2017). In 2017, the Nazarbayev University Library started planning on how to strategize the IL framework to be used in the university. A draft IL program was developed to incorporate the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Using the five frames, four learning outcomes were developed after several consultations with the library coordinators from nine schools of the university.

Faculty – Librarian Collaboration

The Reference Department of the NU Library is structured in such a way that subject librarians are available to provide for the needs of the schools when it comes to the collection and resources. Seven subject librarians provide reference service for the nine schools (Table 2). Each subject librarian coordinates with the entire school to provide library orientation, reference and information sessions. Most subject librarians are international hires with a very diverse background (Alenzuela, 2017). In a 2017 report, participation in information sessions had a slight increase of 1.4%.

Librarian	School
Librarian 1	Center for Preparatory Studies
Librarian 2	Graduate School of Public Policy
	Graduate School of Business
Librarian 3	Graduate School of Education
Librarian 4	School of Engineering
	School of Mining and Geosciences
Librarian 5	School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Librarian 6	School of Medicine
Librarian 7	School of Science and Technology

Table 2. Subject Librarians per School

How do we initiate collaboration with the faculty? How do faculty treat librarians as part of the team?

The approach to integrate the Information Literacy programs of all the schools involves coordinating the library committee members from each school. In January 2018, a proposed set of Learning Outcomes was disseminated to all subject librarians in order to seek their comments. The School of Mining and Geosciences could not comment because they had no representative in the said committee. A timeline was set and after gathering all the comments, more refined learning outcomes emerged. The learning outcomes were presented to the University Library Committee which suggested that it be implemented in the schools. There is an on-going review of learning objectives in each set of identified learning outcomes.

Even though this proposal aims to standardize the whole IL program, the Center for Preparatory Studies has been doing a structured IL program for the NU Zero Year of Master's Program (NUZYP). A three-day meeting over the course of three weeks were scheduled to teach IL to the students. The teaching fellows provided insights for every IL module created for the class. Their valuable suggestions made the teaching experience more enticing for the students. The three modules were about academic integrity and plagiarism, evaluation and types of sources and citation and reference management tools. Both the librarian and faculty worked together to make sure everything ran smoothly and that all things to be discussed are in sync with their current classroom discussions. This was a good start for both the library and the school as they think the task of helping students evaluate sources are better left with the librarian.

Challenges and factors before and during the implementation of an IL program

The university was in existence since 2010, but there was no structured IL program due to the fast transition of work due to replacement or resignation of librarians. Continuity of services and programs suffered and were not properly documented, and the person who replaced them had to start from scratch.

To begin all over again, the librarian needed to be introduced to the community and start collaborating with potential faculty members. The librarian introduced what he can do and started selling his idea. He followed the principle of always grabbing any opportunity to work with faculty on library-related activities. After which, he started telling them about information literacy and its benefits for student success. Once they understood it, they recommended it to other fellow teachers.

With regards to the IL content, faculty recommendations, based from the first run of the NUZYP IL sessions, were straightforward and practical. These recommendations will be very useful in revising the sessions. They were obtained during one-on-one meetings with the faculty course coordinator who reviewed

each slide to make sure of the content. After deciding on the slides, the faculty member will join in the first session and will listen as the librarian conducts the workshop. The faculty member will provide feedback after the end of the session.

It was a good learning experience for both the faculty member and the librarian as they jointly decide what practical information the librarian should deliver during the sessions. It was also a learning experience for the faculty member as they learn new information from the librarian. It must be noted that the librarians need time to develop instructional design, get to learn how to deliver the instruction and create assessment tools and evaluation.

Gaining the school and faculty's trust and building the librarian's own reputation is a challenging yet rewarding effort. (Credo, 2018).

Just like in Binus University Library, the NU Library also follows the KPI method and added IL as an indicator of achievement.

What IL standards or models are they following to make their IL programs effective?

The NU Library brainstormed and applied the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. The library considered the essential elements of IL as being able to identify, find, evaluate, apply, and acknowledge sources of information. These elements are expressed in six frames: authority is constructed and contextual, information creation is a process, information has value, research as inquiry, scholarship as conversation, and searching as strategic exploration. The six frames were integrated into the proposed IL program of the university.

When we provide our IL sessions, we make sure it is as interactive as possible. Our initial step is to gain the attention of the students and we provide a combination of the following: hands-on activity, recorded short quiz, lectures with presentations and samples. We try to fully engage them by asking them to speak and share their actual experiences during class sessions.

How supportive is the administration in their programs?

The University Library Committee discussed and approved the IL Learning Outcomes in February 2018. It is composed of faculty representatives from each school, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Library Deputy General Director, Library General Expert, and a Senior Expert from the library that serves as the secretary. NU Library administration is very supportive of the library projects and programs particularly of the Information Literacy program.

Conclusions

Filipino librarians' attitudes toward work are always optimistic. As an overseas employee, Filipinos are known to be visionary, flexible, patient and as having good

interpersonal skills (Roberto, 2015). They can always survive, wherever their fate brings them. In a multi-culturally diverse environment, professionals show respect to each other and it is the same respect that Filipinos are getting. The Filipino attitude of building trust and gaining respect from colleagues makes it easy for them to work with others. They continue to master their craft. Their resourcefulness at work helps them to achieve their targets. These attributes help them to lead projects and perform well in their place of work no matter where they are. The same attributes help them to establish good working relationships and rapport that allows for collaboration with the faculty members in building an information literacy program. The trust given to Filipino librarians leads them to be members of various institutional committees and the chance also to lead IL programs.

Not all international institutions grant faculty status to their librarians, but this should not hinder them teaching and educating the students as this is the reason for their professional existence. Nevertheless, it would provide good motivation if the institution can see their value and give them proper recognition. Although these three libraries were able to develop their IL programs, there are still pending issues that are not present in some libraries. All of their IL programs are still being integrated into the whole academic curriculum. Although there were no indications of discrimination at work, two libraries are still seeking for faculty-status recognition. At this point, we may say that Dorner's observation of a librarian's lower status may be seen as creating less of an opportunity for the librarians to fully perform their duties (that is to maximize their teaching of skills through the integration of IL into the curriculum). In addition, committee memberships are also important for librarians so they can participate in academic issues. Continuous communication with the faculty members will help build a strong partnership between the library and the entire academic community.

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Appendix

Key Performance Indicator 2013

Faculty / School / Division / Directorate
 VR- Library and Knowledge Center
 David Judha
 Reference Librarian

No.	Perspective	Goal	KPI	Measure- ment	Weight	Target
1			Conduct- ing Infor- mation literacy program to new lecturers and FOL members	Numbers of par- ticipants in the attendance list	10%	75% of partic- ipants Inducted
2			Stock Inventory	Percent- age of lost subscribed printed journals	10%	No missing printed journals
3	Capability Building & Execution	14. Op- erational Excellence (C4)	Stakehold- er satisfac- tion index	The Result of Internal Customers Satisfac- tion Meas- urement (ICSM)	10%	75% of Internal stake- holder are satisfied with LKC
4			Fulfillment of ISO Standard	Total no of findings (Minor & Major) per semester & best practice	5%	No Minor No Major Findings